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"Never Pick up a Rabbit by the Ears": Pet Keeping and Children's Material Worlds in Nineteenth-Century England and Beyond

By Jane Hamlett

The Book of Home Pets, published in London in 1861, offered nineteenth-century readers the following advice:

> Let parents try to inspire their children . . . with a fondness for natural science; whether it be encouraged by keeping and caring for a dog, a cat, a rabbit, a pigeon, or a song-bird; by rearing flowers; by forming an herbarium, or a collection of moths and butterflies, or by other kindred means, and they will surely be better boys and girls, and make better men and women, better members of society, and above all better Christians.[1]

The nineteenth century saw a new enthusiasm for pet keeping that was shared across Western Europe and North America.[2] It was seen as an important part of children's lives that could teach children about morality and how to govern and express their emotions.[3] This discourse increasingly appeared in domestic advice books, books aimed children and a new genre of literature that offered advice exclusively on pet keeping.[4] Kathleen Kete argues that pet keeping in the West was part of a larger shift toward the valorization of kindness to animals, which was increasingly understood as a marker of bourgeois civilization.[5] While historians have noted long-standing differences in attitudes toward animals in Eastern and Western countries, these appear to have become less marked by the end of the nineteenth century.[6] In Egypt and the late Ottoman Empire, more animals were kept as pets.[7] Cihangir Gündoğdu argues that pet dogs became popular in Istanbul as they were strongly associated with

Western society and modernity.[8] Pet keeping then, became increasingly global in the nineteenth century. As the introductory quote indicates, pets were associated with children and constitute an important, although so far unexplored, part of their material worlds. Drawing on the findings of the AHRC Pets and Family Life Project, a large-scale archival research project focused on pet keeping in England, this article presents an in-depth national study of children's relationships with pet animals and reflects on the wider international context, considering how far this relationship between children and pets was shared between East and West.[9]

Studies of pet keeping can make an important contribution to our conceptual understanding of children's material worlds. Since the 1990s, scholars have increasingly examined the material culture of childhood.[10] The relationship between things, material practices and identities has been explored through certain toys such as dolls.[11] Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith have defined this more broadly, arguing that "the history of modern childhood is a material process, engaged with the making of cultural landscapes, buildings, toys, and other stuff and things for children."[12] They suggest thinking about a total material landscape that surrounds children and offers varied opportunities for engagement. So far, discussions of the material culture of childhood have not engaged with the role of animals in this landscape. One obvious reason for this is that animals are not, strictly speaking, material objects—while they are often treated as possessions by humans, they are not static, lifeless things; as animate beings, they do not always fit easily into human-centric constructions of the historical material world.[13] I argue here, though, that animals are worth considering as material objects. First, they are an important part of children's material and emotional worlds—children often pleaded with their parents for a pet, and animals might be more longed for than clothes or toys.[14] Second, pet keeping encouraged children to develop distinct material practices through providing accommodation and the daily routines of feeding and

cleaning. Phillip Howell and Hilda Kean argue that the history of animals has an important material dimension in that it is constituted by material, embodied interactions of humans and animals, as well as their representation.[15] As this article will show, embodied interactions between children and pets could be a fundamental part of their relationships—appropriate handling was an important part of pet keeping.

The idea that pet keeping was morally improving can be seen as part of a new idea of childhood, as a distinctive phase of life in which material practices shaped emotions, values, and behavior. Historians have asked how far can we uncover a global material culture of childhood—and to what extent were the Western moral values that underpinned new ideas of the child in the nineteenth century shared with the East? Gutman and Coninck-Smith have called for a more global approach to understanding the material culture of childhood, arguing that "cross cultural and transnational comparisons are needed to grasp the different effects of modernity across the globe."[16] Specialists on the material culture of childhood argue that its emergence in the nineteenth century and link to the idea of a "good" childhood were specific to industrialized Western democracies.[17] It is clear that new understandings of childhood went further than the West, although as Benjamin Fortna notes, "In the Balkans, Anatolia and Arab lands of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the influence of Western ideas about childhood was important but unevenly absorbed, and always mediated through indigenous institutions, individuals, traditions and desires."[18] In her study of early twentieth-century Egypt, Heidi Morrison also argues that while Western ideas of childhood were increasingly influential, the modernization of childhood occurred here in a different way—Egyptian nationalists supported increased state intervention in child-rearing but the "model that developed" had its own "unique qualities with roots in colonial resistance and Islamic heritage."[19] So, an exploration of children and pet keeping offers a new opportunity to think about the transference of ideas and practices between different cultures.

The emergence of a distinct moral and material culture for children during the nineteenth century has also been linked to the growth of an industrialized bourgeoisie. A shared bourgeois domestic culture developed across the West.[20] Industrialization and mass production gave rise to consumer culture, which produced new specialized goods for children such as nursery furniture and toys.[21] For the middle classes at least, homes became more segregated and new ideals of privacy informed the creation of spaces for children—in England, this manifested through the emergence of the nursery as a separate space in the middle-class home.[22] But how far was that culture shared with neighboring states in southeastern Europe? During the nineteenth century, southeastern European elites began to purchase more “Western” goods, although as Constanta Vintila-Ghitulescu argues, they did not necessarily come with Western values attached.[23] Industrialized economies also produced new forms of print culture that created a wide-ranging literature for children that, by the late nineteenth century, was present in both the West and the late Ottoman Empire.[24] Advice on pet keeping was often a significant presence in Western children’s literature. As Ute Frevert et al. have argued, such texts can be closely linked to the emotional development of children, as they offered a means by which children “learned how to feel.”[25] And as Stephanie Olsen has demonstrated, new understandings of childhood emphasized play, through which modern children often made sense of their emotional worlds.[26] I will show that the enthusiasm for pets can be linked to the development of bourgeois culture, and children’s emotional relations with animals were often propagated through new forms of advice literature produced by industrialized societies. But based on the in-depth source analysis of the national survey and some more speculative comments related to the secondary literature on human-animal relations in the East, it will also question how far children’s pet keeping should be associated with any one particular class or group.[27]

While there is a growing literature on pet keeping, the majority of recent studies of pets have been more concerned with their wider cultural role than their specific implications for families and children.[28] In the late 1990s, Katherine Grier explored the link between new understandings of childhood and pet keeping in a seminal article, in which she argued that pet keeping was recommended for boys, as it was thought to discourage male violence.[29] Studies of pet animals thus far have concentrated overwhelmingly on dogs.[30] Smaller pets, such as birds and animals from the field and hedgerow, were more widely spread across the social scale but have received less attention. These animals could be particularly important to children, however, and were more likely to be seen as suitable pets.[31] For this reason, the national case study presented in this article focuses exclusively on rabbits—animals that were increasingly celebrated as pets and associated with children. Rabbit keeping was a widespread practice that crossed lines of class, age, and gender, and it was often presented as a useful activity for the thrifty poor.[32] Rabbit breeding and "fancying" became more popular among adults, and new breeds were developed (Figure 1).[33] There was a strong association between boys and rabbit keeping that was repeated across different literary genres in the nineteenth century, including books of household advice and domestic management[34] and literature targeted at children.[35] According to the Rev. John Wood, a vicar and naturalist who wrote a number of books on animals and several for children: "Of all domesticated animals dear to the British schoolboy's heart, the Rabbit is, perhaps, the most general favourite."[36] Commentary on rabbit keeping in the late twentieth century has remarked on the animals' capacity to form relationships with and to interact with humans, especially if allowed to hop around the house.[37] For the Victorians, successful rabbit keeping also led to affection and interaction (or at least perceived affection) when, according to Wood, properly tended rabbits could become quite tame and respond to names.[38]

Figure 1. Anon., "The Common Brown Rabbit, the White Angola Rabbit, a Black and White Lop-Eared Rabbit," in *The Book of Home Pets showing How to Rear and Manage them in Sickness and in Health* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, 186-), 480. Pets and Family Life Project Collection.

By considering advice literature and personal accounts, this article explores the significance of pet keeping at the level of both discourse and everyday material practices. The study of rabbits reveals the significance of pet keeping as a material and embodied practice—one that taught children how to perform domesticity (but could also provide room to challenge conventional values) and that allowed them to learn the value of sustained temporal commitment to daily care and to form emotional relationships with animals. Rabbits occupied an ambivalent position in the Victorian household in that they were often destined for the family dinner table. Children were also actively encouraged to see rabbits as potential food and to learn emotional restraint when it came to the fate of their pets. The complex emotional situations created by care for animals, their utility function and sometime role as a foodstuff, and the conflict between adult intentions and children's emotional attachments will also be

assessed. Having used a range of source material to reveal the social range and material and emotional complexity of children's relationships with pet rabbits in the English context, the final section of the article returns to the larger questions of comparison posed by this special issue, considering how far we can use the existing secondary literature to draw broader conclusions about cultures of pet keeping beyond the West. Specifically, we will consider how far pet keeping and human emotional investment in animals was shared across national boundaries, to what extent this was linked to a common bourgeois culture, and how far different cultures made the link between animals and children.

Accommodating Rabbits and Learning Domesticity

Advice literature on keeping pet rabbits, published in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century, focused in depth on the transformation of material environments to provide accommodation. The role of children in creating places for their pets to live was frequently discussed. In her book for children, *Domestic Pets: Their Habits and Treatment* (1895), advice writer Caroline Pridham tells the story of engineer George Stephenson, who kept rabbits as a boy.[39] The model child apparently built a special house for his rabbits that became famous in the district (Figure 2). The Rev. J. R. Wood's advice book for children, *Our Pets* (1870), offered instructions for a hutch that could be made "by any boy of ordinary ingenuity."[40] A hutch could be constructed from materials found at home, including old tea chests and egg boxes. While building hutches allowed children a proactive approach to their material environments, it was also portrayed as a valuable means of learning domesticity. The relationship between boys and domesticity has been debated, but some pet advice writers saw hutch building as a useful exercise in learning about the feminine creation of domesticity as well as practicing masculine skills of construction.[41] *The Book of Home Pets* (1861) criticized boys' domestic provision for rabbits, railing against "the wretchedest of houses—some old tea-chest, or abandoned portmanteau, or leaky tub." The "Old-Fashioned Rabbit-Hutch" was

criticized (Figure 3). The text goes on to construct the persona of an experienced female rabbit who takes boys to task for their failure to provide appropriate accommodation. If only the "matronly doe" could speak, "how she would astound many a rabbit-keeping boy with a recital of her wrongs!" The doe goes on to say:

> Comfortable! Why my house is wretched. How would you like to live in such a one? How would you like to live in such an apartment through the chinks of the walls of which the wind came whistling through with force enough to turn the sails of a windmill, and through the roof of which, in wet weather, the rain came, drip, drip, patter, patter, spoiling the snug bed you had made for your helpless little family, and wetting their naked little bodies, and giving them snuffles in such a shocking way that it goes to one's heart to hear their troubled breathing?[42]

Boys were directly instructed to become more motherly in their approach. Pridham made a similar point with her story about the exemplary boy rabbit keeper, George Stevenson. Stevenson had used his "mother-wit sharpened by kindness to keep them as clean, dry and comfortable as he could."[43] In addition to his masculine skills as a nascent engineer, Stevenson is shown to draw on his femininity or "mother-wit" to successfully care for the rabbits. Here, rabbit keeping had the potential to usefully feminize boys.

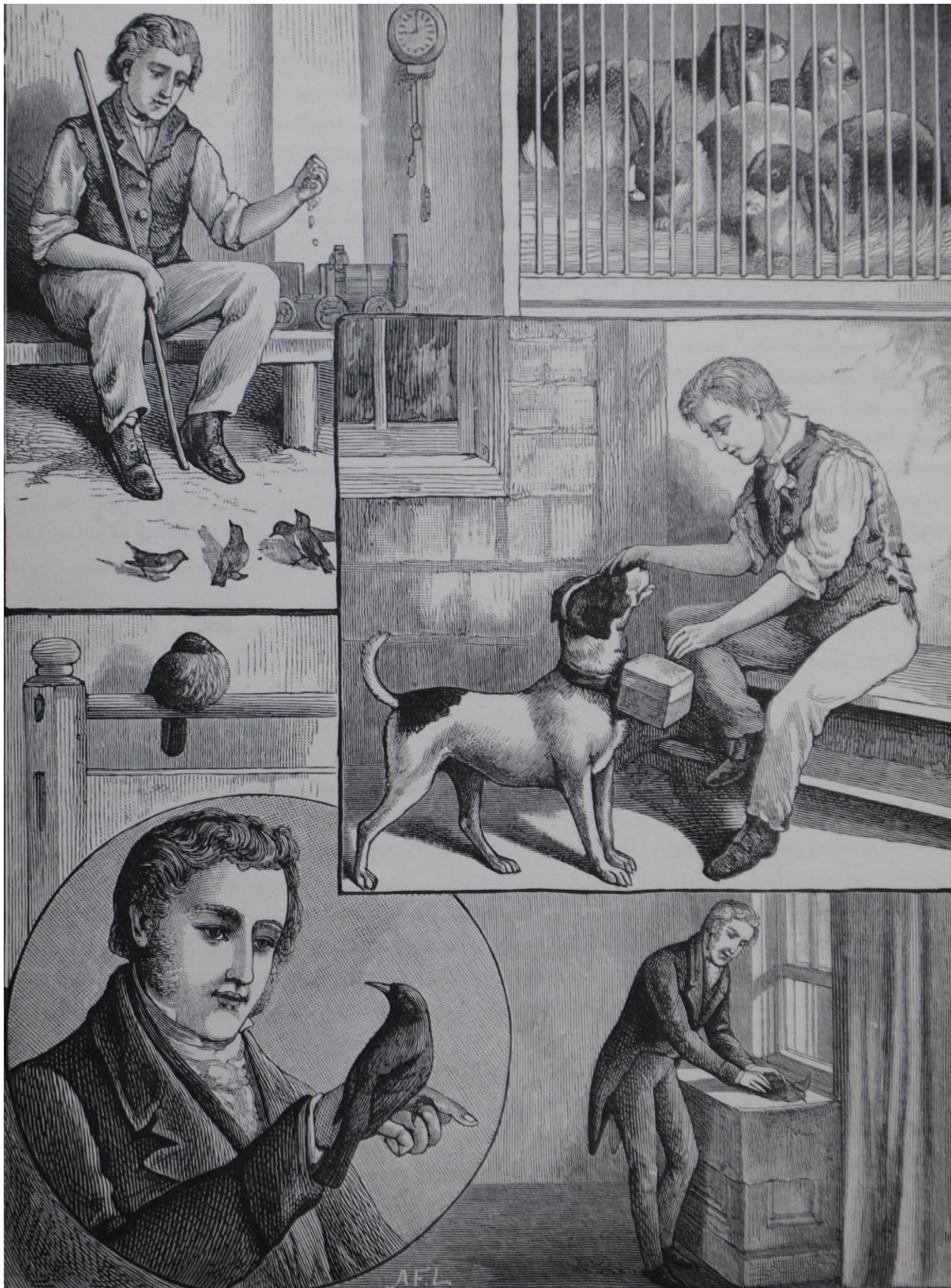

Figure 2. Illustration of George Stevenson and his pets, including well-housed rabbits.

A. F. L., "George Stevenson and his Pets," in Caroline Pridham, *Domestic Pets: Their Habits and Treatment* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1895), 71. Pets and Family Life Project Collection.

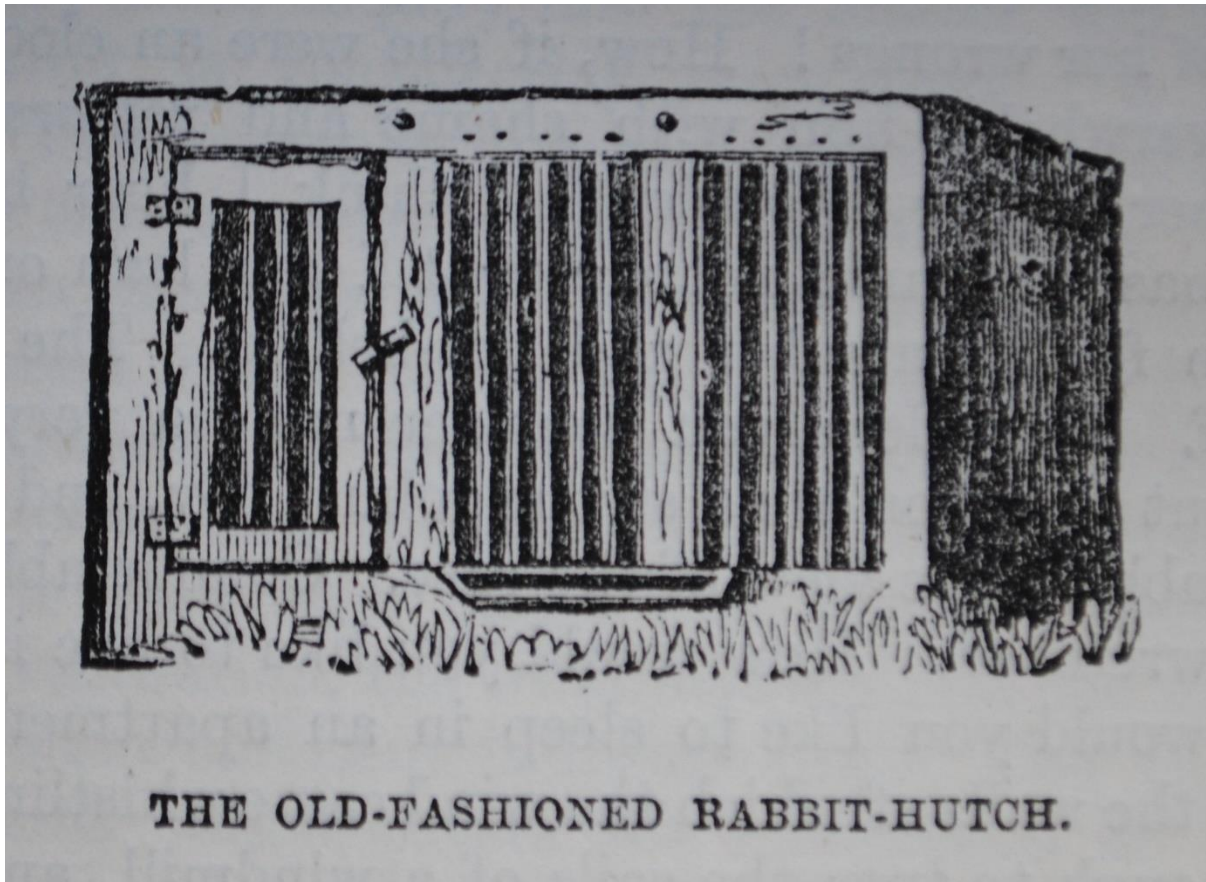

Figure 3. Poorly made rabbit hutches were criticized in *Beeton's Book of Home Pets.* Anon., "The Old-Fashioned Rabbit-Hutch," in *Beeton's Book of Home Pets showing How to Rear and Manage them in Sickness and in Health* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, 186-), 497. Pets and Family Life Project Collection.

While advice manuals presented complex, multi-room rabbit abodes that successfully housed the creatures and satisfied domestic ideals, the reality of hutch creation was somewhat different. Oral histories and autobiographies suggest that parents often built them. In working families, rabbits were acquired with a view to supplementing family resources as much as providing an educational opportunity for children. Grace Foakes, who grew up in Wapping in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, remembers that her father introduced rabbits into the family home for economic reasons—and he took responsibility for housing them: "Father hit upon the idea of keeping rabbits in order to eke out his wages. He bought two, a

buck and a doe, and made hutches for them. They each had two compartments: one living-room and one bedroom."[44] Some fathers were willing to produce housing on demand. Ivy Port, the daughter of a builder who grew up in rural Surrey in the early twentieth century, remembers that when she and her sister Dorcas demanded rabbits, "father knocked up a hutch and everyone was happy."[45] For Oliver Lodge, a businessman's son who lived near Newcastle in the 1860s, it was his mother who supported him and helped with his hobbies (despite carrying on the bookkeeping for his father's business at the same time). "Whatever she did she went into thoroughly," he writes, "At one time I kept rabbits, and she had a many storied shed and enclosures built for them."[46]

While ideal bunnies dwelt in carefully constructed hutches, in practice, rabbits inhabited domestic spaces in a variety of ways that did not always reinforce conventional domesticity. Susan E. Davis and Margo de Mello have recently argued that it is only when rabbits are liberated from hutches and allowed to live indoors with humans that it is possible to fully appreciate their capacity to form relationships and their playfulness.[47] Nineteenth-century rabbit aficionados were certainly aware of this—Beatrix Potter, for example, sometimes kept her famous pets, Benjamin Bouncer (the inspiration for Benjamin Bunny) and Peter Piper, inside.[48] While advice writers often instructed children to build hutches, they also included anecdotes featuring favored rabbits granted free rein in domestic space. The author of *Every Little Boy's Book* (1864) gave this account of the presence a rabbit in the family living spaces:

> He was a most sociable animal, and we admitted him into friendly communion at our board. He was a frequent intruder to the parlour. . . . He would come at our call; and we taught him to sit on his hind legs, and to beat a tambourine; we also taught him to play the piano—that is to rattle with his fore-paws on the keys.[49]

The anecdote offers a sense of the presence of the rabbit in the parlor, its relationship with humans and other family pets, and its agency in domestic space. *The Book of Home Pets* (1861) also tells of "Bunny," a pet rabbit allowed the freedom of a lady's parlor: "I never saw a happier or a merrier pet. Its gambols on the carpet were full of fun."[50] Roaming rabbits were more easily accommodated in bourgeois parlors and drawing rooms where servant labor could easily be drawn on for help. Rabbits might also be released in working-class homes, but in smaller spaces this could end in disaster—Strange records the fate of a wild rabbit who fell from the balcony of a London flat.[51] Yet the presence, agency, and movement of animals changed the static material culture of the home and childhood—suggesting agency and flexibility for both human and animal participants.

"A Little Labour of Love": The Daily Round of Rabbit Care

One reason advice writers emphasized the value of keeping rabbits was that daily feeding and cleaning required a sustained temporal commitment from children—rabbits needed to be fed regularly, cleaned out, and sensibly handled. The performance of these regular acts of care, for another living being, was thought to have a beneficial impact on character and the emotions. According to *Every Little Boy's Book* (1864) rabbit keeping was "a little labour of love" that was thought to "act beneficially, both on the mind and the intellect of the young rabbit-fancier."[52] Children were expected to commit to the daily tasks but it was also important that they learned to feel the right way about them. Pet care provided boys with a grounding in cleanliness and hygiene. *Every Little Boy's Book* sternly noted: "Not only do thoughtless boys forget to feed the objects of their care, but too frequently suffer them to become diseased, for want of attention to cleanliness. This is a very cruel and wicked thing. Rabbits should have their hutches cleaned out every morning, and require many little

attentions to provide for their comfort and health."[53] Wood notes that "some trouble" must be taken over keeping the hutch clean.[54] This was a matter of both hygiene and morality—"no one ought to keep a rabbit who neglects this essential duty, or to undertake the charge of an animal unless he intends to make it as happy as it can be in a state of imprisonment."[55] How far such advice was followed is open to question. While advice writers focused on the failings of boys, girls could find the process equally tedious. Ivy Port writes: "On Saturdays we had to clean out the hutch which took the whole morning."[56] This routine task, combined with food collection, meant that the novelty of keeping rabbits soon wore off.

Rabbit care involved a material performance—an awareness of the bodies of rabbits and a need to find the right balance in terms of sustenance. According to *How to Manage Rabbits* (1890), rabbits should be fed two or three times a day, but careful observation of how much they ate was required, to avoid both "waste" and ill health[57] (Figure 4). In an increasingly industrialized and urban society, advice literature sometimes imagined pet keeping as a means to retain contact with the rural natural world. Wood (1870) gives instructions on gathering food for rabbits, cautioning on how to distinguish between cow parsley (a favorite with rabbits) and hemlock (which was poisonous).[58] This advice might have been useful for country or suburban children with access to fields and hedgerows, but also presented an imagined relationship between children and the natural world that was fast becoming an ideal. Countryside-based Ivy Port reports that "we were told that we had to get food for them (hogweed and cold parsley) every evening *or else*!!."[59] For urban working-class children, finding food could offer a different kind of education in ingenuity and the exploitation of waste. Grace Foakes explains how her family fed their Wapping-based rabbits: "We never brought anything for the rabbits in the way of food, but whenever we passed a greengrocer we went in and asked for the outside leaves of greens and cabbages.

Potato peelings and carrot and turnip peelings were carefully saved. Stale bread picked up from the streets also helped to feed them."[60]

Figure 4. Illustration showing boys feeding attentive rabbits, who are apparently familiar with their routine. Anon., "Domestic Pets," in *Every Little Boy's Book* (London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1864), 207. Pets and Family Life Project Collection.

Successful rabbit keeping required the acquisition of tactile, embodied knowledge in order to handle them competently. Almost all guidance on rabbits offered advice on how they should be picked up. Wood (1870) states that they should also always be picked up by the ears with one hand while supporting them with the other.[61] Pridham offered the same advice.[62] *How to Manage Rabbits* noted that some care was needed when handling them: "With one hand take them gently up by the ears and place your other hand under the rump, be careful not to take them up too roughly for if you do you are sure to injure your rabbits."[63] The domestic advice compendium *Sylvia's Family Management* appears to have shortened these instructions to

picking up by the ears "and no other way"—a truncation that probably had unfortunate consequences for any child rabbit keepers who followed it.[64] One of the reasons the Port sisters' foray into rabbit keeping was short lived was Ivy's continued discomfort with handling the animals. She writes: "we carried the rabbits by their ears. I think we should have held their back legs too because they would sort of pedal the air and I was afraid I'd drop mine. I didn't like this business at all but we were threatened if we didn't do it."[65] This is a good demonstration of the limits of advice literature—clearly the sisters were unaware of the approved methods of rabbit handling.

Careful and successful handling was also expected to build an emotional relationship between child and rabbit. In her recent study of behavior problems in pet rabbits, Sharon L. Crowell-Davis demonstrates the importance of the secure handling of rabbits—it is essential to support their hind quarters and back when they are picked up. Rabbits carried in this position throughout their lives are more likely to be able to relax when held.[66] Some Victorian commentators were also aware that successful relationships could be built with rabbits through the right kind of tactile human-animal exchange. According to the author of *Every Little Boy's Book,* "The rabbit is a caressing animal, and equally fond, with the cat, of the head being stroked, and is very much attached to its keeper."[67] In Pridham's book, an illustration of an ideal boy pet keeper shows him picking up a rabbit—which appears to be comfortably cradled in his arms –suggesting a trust relationship between human and animal (Figure 5). Victorian children also remembered positive relationships with rabbits expressed through tactile experience. For Grace Foakes, her feelings about her rabbits were bound up in her response to their tactile and physical nature: "We children adored those rabbits. Their soft silky fur, their twitching noses, long ears, beautiful eyes and their helplessness made me love them as I have never loved an animal before or since."[68]

Figure 5. This illustration represents the imagined tactile relationship between children and rabbits—a boy correctly handles a small rabbit while another rabbit demonstrates affection through touch. Anon., "Saturday Afternoon," in Caroline Pridham, *Domestic Pets: Their*

Habits and Treatment (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1895), 75. Pets and Family Life Project Collection.

Learning Emotional Restraint: Breeding and Eating

While advice on rabbit keeping pushed the idea that children (especially boys) should learn to love and care for living things, it was also about establishing the boundaries of emotional commitment. In many households, the routine consumption of rabbits as food taught children to limit their emotional attachment and to unquestioningly consume what was placed before them. Of all the animals designated as pets in the Victorian period, rabbits were one of the most ambiguous, in that they were the most likely to end up on the dinner table. These ironies are illustrated in Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit story, in which Peter's father is consigned to a pie. The humor involved in Potter's popular tale suggests a wry self-consciousness, but also a basic shared acceptance of the necessity of rabbit consumption. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, domestic rabbit keeping took place alongside the development of a large-scale trade in rabbit meat production and rabbit fur that was popular in both Europe and America.[69]

A similar dual approach characterized advice literature on rabbit keeping, which, while encouraging children to develop emotional relationships with rabbits, was often prosaic about their utility value. There was an expectation that they would be bred for profit. The economics of rabbit keeping could serve a valuable lesson in teaching children how to manage money—according to Wood, "as commercial speculation, they can, with proper care and forethought, be rendered extremely profitable, and will pay a heavy per-centage on the original outlay."[70] *How to Manage Rabbits* (1890) also noted that "the common sort are the most profitable, as they are very hardy and cost little to keep."[71] While there was an expectation that boys would breed rabbits, this aspect of rabbit keeping seems to have been

less discussed in texts aimed at both sexes.[72] Unsurprisingly, the physical elements of intercourse were not explicitly mentioned. Wood writes of the buck and doe "coming together,"[73] while *The Book of Home Pets* coyly considers how the buck may be "induced to look in and see how your does are getting on."[74]

Literature targeted at boys dealt with the expected fate of rabbits more directly. *Every Little Boy's Book* (1864) includes a section titled "Fattening Rabbits." The following instructions are given: "Rabbits are in perfection for eating when about nine months old, and should be put to fatten when they are about six. It requires about three months to make rabbits thoroughly fat and ripe; half the time may make them eatable, but by no means equal in the quality of their flesh."[75] The word "ripe" places the animal firmly in the category of foodstuff. While rabbits were seen as a food source, there was some concern about killing them humanely. *The Book of Home Pets* gave detailed instructions: "The most usual mode of killing the rabbit—as being the most sudden and the least painful—is to strike it with the edge of the open palm on the neck immediately behind the poll."[76] Once the rabbit had been knocked out, its throat would be cut. While it was widely accepted that rabbits would be killed and eaten, this did not preclude close attachment to certain chosen animals. On the page following the "Fattening Rabbits" section, the author of *Every Little Boy's Book* went on to discuss the fate of "prodigious pet" and "favourite for many years."[77] "When at last he went, honoured and lamented, to the grave; and a head and foot-stone mark the spot where he takes his everlasting rest."[78] Rather than being consumed, this favored rabbit was given a quasi-Christian burial—an activity increasingly common among Victorian pet keepers (especially for dogs).[79]

Not everyone had the luxury of being able to bury a favored pet in the garden, and in working families, rabbits were more likely to be destined for the pot. However, as we have seen in the case of Grace Foakes, animals acquired for utility purposes were no less likely to inspire

strong emotional attachments in children—and this could render the consumption of animals problematic and even traumatic. Grace remembers: "When the babies grew to a reasonable size, my father would kill one and hang it up for a day or two before skinning it. Then we ate it for Sunday dinner." [80] The children found the process of having to eat their favorites painful and difficult, but their father insisted, evoking the respectable rhetoric of avoiding waste: "We children were horrified when Father did this and none of us wanted any. But father insisted we eat it, saying he could not have good food wasted. He kept rabbits for a long time, and every few weeks we had that hateful meal."[81] Insisting that the children eat up was a necessary means of training them to make the most of all means at their disposal—and helping them learn to cope with managing their lives in difficult economic circumstances.

Children and Pets beyond Britain

The nation-based case study demonstrates that in nineteenth-century England, pet keeping was thought to teach children to behave, acquire emotional knowledge and demonstrate Christian virtue. Rabbit keeping was increasingly recommended as an activity for children, especially boys. Analyzing advice literature alongside personal testimony reveals that keeping rabbits as pets had a significant impact on children's material and emotional worlds—through the construction of accommodation, learning to handle the rabbits and through the control of their bodies. The case study also shows that while pet keeping was celebrated in a literature that was often aimed at middle-class, urban children, rabbits also frequently became pets in working-class families. Indeed, children could form independent emotional understandings of rabbits as pets despite adult expectations that they should be viewed as food. As we have seen, similar cultures of pet keeping were found in North America and Europe, but how far were they shared between East and West? Given the paucity of research on global pet keeping so far, any comments must remain speculative—

what follows considers this question on the basis of the existing secondary literature in this area, on animals in the late Ottoman Empire, and children's culture in southeastern Europe.

By the late nineteenth century, Eastern and Western cultures of pet keeping had become more homogenous. There is evidence that distinctively Western cultures of pet keeping began to be proactively adopted in the Ottoman Empire. Cihangir Gündoğdu argues that pet dogs became popular in Istanbul, as they were strongly associated with Western society and modernity. The adoption of "modern" Western practices was seen as a means of uniting the embattled Ottoman Empire and overcoming religious divisions. Imported pedigree dogs were promoted by an increasing range of popular publications.[82] By the 1920s, he suggests, ordinary families were routinely photographed with their dogs.[83] The increasing similarity of Western and Eastern pet cultures was also signaled by the emergence of organizations for animal protection. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in Britain in 1824, the French Societé protrectice des animaux in 1845, and German, Swiss, American and Swedish counterparts followed later in the century.[84] These were followed by the Istanbul Society for Protection of Animals, which was established in 1912—it was modeled on the British society, with whose founders it was in close correspondence.[85] However, compassion for animals was not a Western import. As Gündoğdu and Catherine Pinguet both show, there were long-standing traditions of animal care in Istanbul, dating back to at least the eighteenth century, when foundations fed animals on certain days and sick animals were sheltered.[86]

Historians have clearly identified different traditions in human-animal relationships in Eastern and Western societies. In the early nineteenth century, there were significant differences in the way that humans and animals lived together in Western Europe and parts of the late Ottoman Empire. This is particularly clear in the case of dogs, which lived on the streets in Eastern cities but were more likely to be allowed to inhabit human homes in the West.[87] Victorian Britons often defined pets as animals that lived in domestic space and made

an emotional contribution to the home—hence titles such as *The Book of Home Pets* (1861). Western visitors were repelled by rogue dogs on the streets of Istanbul and Cairo, whereas Eastern writers ridiculed the Western practice of keeping dogs indoors.[88] Alan Mikhail has argued that while dogs are sometimes considered ritually impure in Islam, "the actual historical record of Muslims' writing about and interactions with dogs is on the whole much more positive."[89] However, in his study of nineteenth-century Ottoman Egypt, Mikhail also argues that street dogs came to be seen as more problematic in urban space, and there is little evidence that people had emotional or affective bonds with them.[90] Catherine Pinguet makes a different argument about Istanbul—pointing to a long-standing tradition of caring for animals and providing cats and dogs with water.[91] There is also some evidence that street dogs were given names and formed relationships with certain households.[92] Pinguet's work is particularly interesting, as it suggests emotional investment in the same animals that were celebrated as pets in the West. These relationships with dogs shared some characteristics with human-pet relations in Western European culture—for example, forming links to particular families and being given names—but were nonetheless different to the culture of pet keeping as understood by Europeans.

The Christian West and the Muslim East, then, both had long-standing traditions of emotional investment in animals—but a significant marker of the Western "pet" was its presence in domestic space, a practice that was not adopted in the East until later on. But how far was this shift in human-animal cultures also shared across the different cultural and national groups in southeastern Europe—and how did differences of religion and local tradition influence relationships between humans and animals? In the nineteenth century, newly formed states—such as Romania and Bulgaria—often looked to Western cultures, and especially France, to help forge modern national identities.[93] Southeastern European elites adopted and modified Western domestic goods and practices.[94] Whether or not bourgeois

Bulgarians and Romanians imported the French taste for poodle dogs along with their Louis XVI furniture—and what the meaning of such animals might have been—remains open to question. A further issue is how far Western ideas might have coincided or converged with expectations about human-animal relationships embedded in traditional peasant cultures. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, British folklore specialists collected stories from Romanian folklore.[95] While their rendition of Romanian culture was problematic, the stories they compiled do suggest a long-standing shared Christian culture of relationships between humans and cats and dogs. There was an expectation that these animals would share domestic space. The story of how cats and dogs first came to live with humans, for example, tells of how the animals came to Adam's house and negotiated over who lived inside and outside.[96] There were also similarities in the way that pet animals were gendered. Dogs and cats were sometimes portrayed as a married couple—the dog as the hard-working husband, the cat as a lazy and greedy wife.[97] There are interesting parallels here between the Victorian British evocation of dogs—they were usually seen as masculine, steadfast, and loyal—and condemnation of cats—which were portrayed as feminine, sly, and deceitful.[98] In the twenty-first century there remain significant differences in pet keeping across Eastern countries—while Poland and Romania have some of the highest numbers of dogs per household globally, pets are less popular in Turkey, where there is a preference for fish and birds.[99] The higher numbers of pets in Romania and Poland today may well reflect a longer history and acceptance of pet keeping as a part of their Christian cultures.

We will now return to the fundamental question of the relationship between children and pets. As this article has shown, pet keeping was an important part of Western discourses about children's material worlds. But how widely was this shared? Certainly, there were convergences in the culture of childhood across East and West in the late nineteenth century. There was a clearer demarcation of childhood in the West and an acceptance that the state

should be involved in bringing children up—learning appropriate moral behaviors was important but there was also an increasing awareness of the value of play.[100] These ideas were adopted, in different ways, by the Ottomans in Istanbul as well as the newly emergent Balkan states. Writing about childhood and violence nineteenth-century Wallachia, for example, Nicoleta Roman shows that the state became more protective toward the body of the child.[101] There is some evidence that the relationship between children and animals had a role to play in these new ways of envisioning childhood. Early twentieth-century Ottoman discourses linked kindness toward animals with children. Like the RSPCA, the Istanbul SPA targeted children and established branches in schools.[102] The treatment of pets was also likened to modern child-rearing practices in discussions of national reform.[103] And, as in the West, the Ottoman world also saw a new appreciation of the child as a consumer, with the appearance of new publications targeted at children.[104] While we can say something about the appearance of the pet-child relationship in discourse, there is, as yet, very little research on how this was experienced beyond the West. Benjamin Fortna argues that the commonality in children's experience across Eastern and Western societies has been underestimated.[105] How far that commonality of experience extended to attitudes toward the relationship between children and animals and to pet keeping as a material practice remains unclear, however. While the British example shows us how pet keeping could be embedded in the material worlds of children—and how its routine materiality built emotional attachment—until more research is carried out into the lives of children as consumers and pet keepers in southeastern Europe, how far these experiences were shared on a wider basis must remain uncertain.

Notes

[1] *The Book of Home Pets showing How to Rear and Manage them in Sickness and in Health* (London: Samuel Beeton, 1861) 802.

[2] Ingrid H. Tague, *Animal Companions: Pets and Social Change in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), Chapter 2. Also see Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Pet Keeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and Katherine Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (Florida: Harcourt Books, 2006).
[3] The idea that pet keeping could influence children's behavior had been established in eighteenth-century literature for children. See Tague, *Animal Companions*, 44, 87–88.
[4] One of the earliest titles in this genre was Jane Loudon's *Domestic Pets: Their Habits and Management* (London: Grant and Griffith, 1851).
[5] Kete, *Beast in the Boudoir*, 4.
[6] See Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Chapter 3; Suraiya Faroqui, ed., *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Eren, 2010).
[7] Alan Mikhail suggests that Egyptian elites began to keep pets in the late nineteenth century. Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt,* Chapter 4.
[8] Cihangir Gündoğdu, "Dogs Feared and Dogs Loved: Human-Dog Relations in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Society and Animals*, May 14, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-BJA10008.
[9] The AHRC Pets and Family Life Project ran from 2016 to 2019 at the Royal Holloway, University of London and the University of Manchester. See https://pethistories.wordpress.com/.
[10] Recently summarized in Megan Brandow-Faller, "Introduction: Materializing the History of Childhood and Children," in *Childhood by Design: Toys and the Material Culture of Childhood, 1700–Present*, ed. Megan Brandow-Faller (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), 1–30. Also see Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith, eds., *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space and the Material Culture of Children* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).
[11] M. Forman-Brunel, *Made to Play House: Girls and the Commercialisation of American Girlhood* (London: Yale University Press, 1993); Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Middle-Class Families and Domestic Interiors in England, 1850–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), Chapter 3.
[12] Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith, "Introduction: Good to Think With—History, Space, and Modern Childhood," in *Designing Modern Childhoods,* eds. Gutman and Coninck-Smith, 13.
[13] Erica Fudge points out that most history books about the home do not mention pets. Erica Fudge, *Pets* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 5, 13–15.
[14] Jane Hamlett and Julie Marie Strange, *Pet Revolution* (London: Reaktion, forthcoming March 2023).
[15] Hilda Kean and Phillip Howell, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Human-Animal History* (London: Routledge, 2018).
[16] Gutman and Coninck-Smith, "Introduction," 2.
[17] Gutman and Coninck-Smith, "Introduction," 2.
[18] Benjamin Fortna, "Preface: Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After," in *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After*, ed. Benjamin C. Fortna (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1–20.
[19] Heidi Morrison, *Childhood and Colonial Modernity in Egypt* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), 17.
[20] Jane Hamlett, "Introduction: The Home in the West in the Age of Empire," in *A Cultural History of Home in the Age of Empire,* ed. Jane Hamlett (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 1–18.
[21] Dennis Dennisoff, "Small Change: The Consumerist Designs of the Nineteenth-Century Child," in *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture*, ed. Dennis Denisoff (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 1–26.
[22] Gutman and Coninck-Smith, "Introduction," 4–5. Jane Hamlett, "White Painted Fortresses? English Upper and Middle-Class Nurseries, 1850–1910," *Home Cultures* 10, no. 3 (2015): 245–66.
[23] Constanta Vintila-Ghitulescu, *Women, Consumption, and the Circulation of Ideas in South-Eastern-Europe, 17th–19th Centuries* (Boston: Brill, 2017), 8–9.
[24] Fortna, "Preface," x.
[25] Ute Frevert et al., *Learning How to Feel: Children's Literature and Emotional Socialisation 1870–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[26] Stephanie Olsen, "Learning How to Feel Through Play: At the Intersection of Histories of Play, Childhood and the Emotions," *International Journal of Play* 5, no. 3 (2016): 323–28.
[27] For a challenge to the perception of pet keeping as a bourgeois phenomenon, also see Julie Marie Strange, "When Johnny met Benny: Class, Pets and Family Life in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain," *History of the Family* 26, no. 2 (2021): 214–35.
[28] Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Phillip Howell, *At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); Sarah Amato, *Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).
[29] Katherine C. Grier, "Childhood Socialization and Companion Animals: United States, 1820–1870," *Society and Animals,* 7, no. 2 (1999): 95–120. Claudia Soares has also recently mapped the important emotional role of pets in nineteenth-century residential institutions for children. Claudia Soares, "'The Many Lessons which the

Care of Some Loveable, Gentle Animals Would Give': Animals, Pets and Emotions in Children's Welfare Institutions, 1870–1920," *History of the Family* 26 no. 2 (2021): 236–65.
[30] See, for example, Howell, *At Home and Astray*; Michael Warbuoys, Julie-Marie Strange, and Neil Pemberton, *Breed: The Invention of the Modern Dog* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2018).
[31] For example, dogs are not included in the list of pets in *Every Little Boy's Book* (London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1864), 206–73.
[32] Esther Hewlett, *Cottage Comforts, With Hints for Promoting Them, Gleaned from Experience* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1825), 252; John Henry Walsh, *A Manual of Domestic Economy* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1879), 389; *Cassell's Household Guide*, Vol. 3 (London: Cassell and Company, 1897), 24.
[33] Including the Harlequin, English Spot, and Havana, and in the 1890s, there was a craze for Belgian hares. Susan E. Davis and Margo de Mello, *Stories Rabbits Tell: A Natural and Cultural History of a Misunderstood Creature* (New York: Lantern Books, 2003), 70. The contents of *Fur and Feather,* which was set up in 1890, is a testament to the scale and range of rabbit breeding in England by the late nineteenth century. In January 1895, for example, the magazine listed rabbit shows taking place at St. Helens, Henley on Thames, Reigate, Liverpool, Nottingham, Batley, Leamington Spa and Pickering. "Exhibition Listings," *Fur and Feather* 5, no. 245 (1895): 2.
[34] Hewlett, *Cottage Comforts*, 96; Mrs. Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1889), 630; *Bennett's Everyday Book* (London, William Nicholson & Sons, 1880) 13.
[35] J. G. Wood, *Every Boy's Book* (London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1860), 299.
[36] John George Wood, *Our Domestic Pets* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1870), 263.
[37] Davis and De Mello, *Stories Rabbits Tell*, xvi.
[38] Wood, *Our Domestic Pets,* 283.
[39] Caroline Pridham, *Domestic Pets: Their Habits and Treatment* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1895), 70–76. Pridham's real name was Mrs L. G. Wait and she also wrote religious advice literature.
[40] Wood, *Our Pets,* 267.
[41] See John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London: Yale, 1999); Hamlett, *Material Relations*, Chapter 4.
[42] *The Book of Home Pets,* Vol. 2, 498.
[43] Pridham, *Domestic Pets,* 76.
[44] Grace Foakes, *My Part of the River* (London: Futura Publications Ltd., 1976), 102.
[45] West Sussex Record Office, Add Mss. 41506, Memoirs of Ivy Port of Rudgwick. d. 1990.
[46] Sir Oliver Lodge, *Past Years: An Autobiography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), 32.
[47] Davis and De Mello, *Stories Rabbits Tell*, xiv. Also see Sharon L. Crowell-Davis, "Behavior Problems in Pet Rabbits," *Journal of Exotic Pet Medicine* 16, no. 1 (2007): 38–44.
[48] Davis and De Mello, *Stories Rabbits Tell*, p.70
[49] *Every Little Boy's Book*, 257.
[50] *The Book of Home Pets,* Vol.2, 491.
[51] Hamlett and Strange, *Pet Revolution*.
[52] *Every Little Boy's Book,* 249.
[53] *Every Little Boy's Book*, 255.
[54] Wood, *Our Pets,* 279–80.
[55] Wood, *Our Pets*, 279-80.
[56] West Sussex Record Office, Add Mss. 41506.
[57] *How to Manage Rabbits* (London: W. S. Fortey, 1890).
[58] Wood, *Our Pets*, 284.
[59] West Sussex Record Office, Add Mss 41506.
[60] Foakes, *My Part of the River,* 102.
[61] Wood, *Our Pets*, 281.
[62] Pridham, *Domestic Pets*, 78.
[63] *How to Manage Rabbits.*
[64] *Sylvia's Family Management* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1886), 449.
[65] West Sussex Record Office, Add Mss. 41506.
[66] Crowell-Davis, "Behaviour Problems in Pet Rabbits," 40.
[67] *Every Little Boy's Book*, 257
[68] Foakes, *My Part of the River*, 102.
[69] Davis and De Mello, *Stories Rabbits Tell*, 236, 266, 270.
[70] Wood, *Our Pets*, 264–65.
[71] *How to Manage Rabbits*, 1890.
[72] See, for example, Pridham, *Domestic Pets.*
[73] Wood, *Our Pets,* 290.

[74] *The Book of Home Pets*, Vol. 2, 510.
[75] *Every Little Boy's Book,* 255–56.
[76] *The Book of Home Pets,* Vol.2, 524.
[77] *Every Little Boy's Book,* 257.
[78] *Every Little Boy's Book,* 257.
[79] Hamlett and Strange, *Pets: A History*.
[80] Foakes, *My Part of the River*, 102.
[81] Foakes, *My Part of the River*, 102.
[82] Gündoğdu, "Dogs Feared and Dogs Loved."
[83] Gündoğdu, "Dogs Feared and Dogs Loved."
[84] Kete, *Beast in the Boudoir*, 3.
[85] Cihangir Gündoğdu, "The Animal Rights Movement in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republic: The Society for Protection of Animals (Istanbul, 1912)," in *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire,* ed. Faroqui, 374–78.
[86] Gündoğdu, "The Animal Rights Movement," 378; Catherine Pinguet, "Istanbul's Street Dogs at the End of the Ottoman Empire: Protection or Extermination," in *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire,* ed. Faroqui, 353–72.
[87] Although it should be noted that dogs were also often kept outside the home in Victorian Britain, and street dogs were perceived as a problem in London. Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 85–86.
[88] Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt*, Chapter 3, 7
[89] Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt,* Chapter 3, 9.
[90] Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt,* Chapter 4.
[91] Pinguet, "Istanbul's Street Dogs," 353–72.
[92] Sadri Sema, *Eski Istanbul Hatiralari* (Istanbul, 1991), 58–59; Quoted in Gündoğdu, "The Animal Rights Movement," 373–96, 380.
[93] Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804–1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta, 1999), 59–60.
[94] Vintila-Ghitulescu, *Women, Consumption, and the Circulation of Ideas*, 8–9.
[95] M. Gaster, *Rumanian Bird and Beast Stories Rendered into English* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd. for the Folk-Lore Society, 1915); Mrs E. B. Mawr, *Roumanian Fairy Tales and Legends* (London: Abela, [1881] 2009).
[96] Gaster, *Rumanian Bird and Beast Stories*, 208–10.
[97] Patricia Furstenburg, "Animals in Romanian Folklore," https://alluringcreations.co.za/wp/animals-romanian-folklore-mythology/.
[98] Amato, *Beastly Possessions,* Chapter 2.
[99] In 2015, a survey by the German market intelligencer GfK found high levels of dog and cat ownership in Poland and a lower frequency of pet keeping in Turkey. See https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2405078/cms-pdfs/fileadmin/user_upload/country_one_pager/nl/documents/global-gfk-survey_pet-ownership_2016.pdf. A 2019 survey found that Romania had the largest share of households owning at least one dog in the European Union (46 percent). See https://www.statista.com/statistics/515475/dog-ownership-european-union-eu-by-country/.
[100] Laurence Brockliss, "Introduction: The Western Concept of Childhood," in *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire,* ed. Fortna, 1–20.
[101] Nicoleta Roman, "A Dimension of Private Life in Wallachia: Violence between Parents and Children (1830–1860)," *The History of the Family* 19, no. 2 (2014) 182–201.
[102] Gündoğdu, "The Animal Rights Movement," 384.
[103] Cihangir Gündoğdu, "Dogs Feared and Dogs Loved."
[104] Fortna, "Preface," x.
[105] Fortna, "Preface," xi.